men and women exchange gossip and sit about, joining in the songs or merely observing the proceedings; while the young people form part of the singing, dancing circle that revolves almost without pause about the central post of the *tonnelle*, the shelter where the festivities are held.

To speak of discipline in connection with these dances is to evoke new and astonishing images for readers familiar with the more popular literature on Haiti. It is admittedly true that as one first witnesses a *vodun* dance, one's reaction is that this is a performance governed solely by the dictates of individual possession. These ceremonies are usually held at night, deep in the bush, lighted only by a small, smoking oil lamp and by the candles fastened to the pegs of the drums, while the participants dress in anything but their best clothing, and in their belts the men carry the machetes always worn by the Haitian peasant. Add to this the effect of the unceasing rhythms of the drumming, the blanket of sound from the unison singing of the participants, the violence of the possessions, and it is not strange that the untrained observer tends to assess what he sees in almost any terms but those of the underlying discipline that defines all activity in the worship of the gods. A release of psychic tension is undoubtedly afforded those who become possessed, and this is also experienced to a lesser degree by all those in attendance. Nevertheless, it must be emphasized, despite so much that has been written to the contrary, that this form of worship of the *loa* is neither unrestrained hysteria nor drunken orgiastic satisfaction of the sex drive. The behavior of the participants, in terms of the accepted patterns of European and American religious decorum, often seems uncouth, vigorous, violent, and even dangerous, when it is merely the expression of a different tradition. And as for the orgiastic aspects of these rites, Haitians have ample opportunity to satisfy their sexual impulses elsewhere, without making this a basic and constant element in the worship of their gods.

Vodun dances, in Mirebalais as elsewhere, take place on

L. Courlander B-6 (1897-1968) 1980 1973 1981 1983

541 half-demon cannibals who meet in secret in the hollow heart of the mapou tree. Some are dressed in comic ancient military attire, replete with swords, epaulets, medals, and outlandish beards, representing "the Generals." Others, under the name Bande Automphonique, follow a human phonograph—a leader singing through an antique Edison horn.

541 88 And there are bands of male *rabaniers*, or Maypole dancers, some of them attired as women, weaving their colored ribbons around portable poles, to the accompaniment of guitars, marimbulas, and cha-chas. Male stick dancers known as *batonnis*, dressed in women's clothing, crouch in circles and perform baton-tapping dances to the accompaniment of drumming and singing. Other small bands wander about impersonating characters from folklore or politics in grotesque homemade costumes. One might see, for example, a familiar lawyer driving before him a band of zombies, wielding a whip, and barking out weird nonsense commands.

After the cataclysmic grand finale of the Mardi Gras at Shrovetide there is the briefest of lulls, and then the country is in the throes of Rara. The day of the *roi* Lwalwali (the King of Lwalwali) has arrived. Hundreds of Rara bands move through the towns and villages, each with its orchestra of bamboo trumpets or conch-shell horns and its "king"—an ornately clad dancer or baton juggler. The Rara bands move from place to place, dance, sing, exhibit their featured performers, and then move on, pursued perhaps by other bands behind them or jostled by another group moving in the opposite direction. When darkness comes, the bands light their way with wooden torches or candelabra of tiny oil lamps. Every week end for seven weeks, in the heat of day and the darkness of night, the mountain trails are alive with these processions.

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541 The Rara festivities reach their climax on Good Friday week end, and by Easter morning they are ended. During these final days there is a last grand display, with troupes coming in from the mountains and the plains to the larger cities and towns. One of the traditional Rara convocation centers in the south is the town of Léogane. On Good Friday week end, Léogane is transformed into a milling, surging, trumpeting mass of celebrating country people.

533 831 535 The songs heard during Rara are full of praise or derision for well-known personalities. Some of them are boldly ribald or licentious. And often the dancing itself is openly sexual in its implications. Haitians humorously refer to this kind of dancing as *ravagé* (enraged, crazy).

541 675 Early in January, even while the Mardi Gras is in progress, each community gets down to the business of organizing its Rara group. It may be organized in one of several ways. In certain communities there

2: Courlander B-5 (1937-1955) 1960 SV3 Haiti SV3
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22. *An assortment of stones (Indian artifacts) from the altar of a houngfor in the mountains above Jacmel. All are regarded as thunder stones thrown to earth by the loa Sobo and Kitbiosa, or as stones containing the essence of other deities.*

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23. *A houngan of southern Haiti divining with the aid of his asson, bell, and (right) gourdo.*